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ABSTRACT

This document, volume 1, summarizes the main findings and conclusions of a comprehensive assessment of the state of knowledge of Organization Development (OD) in education and the nature and extent of use of OD in school districts in the United States and Canada. The study is divided into five separate volumes. Volume 2 assesses the state of knowledge of OD in the research literature by reviewing over 50 recent sources. Volume 3 consists of two empirical studies of OD in school systems. The first study involved identifying and gathering questionnaire data on over 300 OD consultants in education in the United States and Canada. Detailed information by questionnaire and telephone was collected from a final sample of 76 districts. Volume 4 contains three onsite case studies selected from the sample of 76. Volume 5 summarizes the main results of the project as a whole and makes recommendations for how and if OD should be used and about the future of OD in schools. (Author/MLF)

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OD IN SCHOOLS: THE STATE OF THE ART

VOL. I: INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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REFACE

This study of the state of the art of Organization Development (OD) in education consists of a comprehensive assessment of the state of knowledge of OD in education and the nature and extent of use of OD in school districts in the United States and Canada. The study is divided into five separate volumes.

Volume I, Introduction, includes an introduction and overview of the project, and an executive summary of the main findings and conclusions of the different components of the study.

Volume II, Review of Reviews, assesses the state of knowledge of OD in the research literature by reviewing over fifty recent sources. This review concentrates on theoretically and empirically based overviews, comparative studies, commentaries and critiques of OD in general, and OD in education in particular. The review focusses on a review of reviews, but also includes recent major case studies of OD in education. The literature review involves four major themes or aspects of OD: 1) assumptions, values, goals and definitions of OD, 2) operating characteristics (conditions affecting entry, initiation and continuance of OD programs), 3) effects or impact, and 4) the future of OD.

Volume III, OD Consultants/OD Programs in School Districts, consists of two empirical studies of OD in school systems which we carried out. The first study involved identifying and gathering questionnaire data on over 300 OD consultants in education in the United States and Canada. Information was collected on the location, position, background, training, OD approaches and extent of activities of the consultants in working with school districts. Nominations were obtained from the consultants of school districts which they thought were involved in "sustained" (lasting a minimum of 18 months) OD programs. These nominations were used to construct a sample of school districts with sustained OD programs. Detailed information by questionnaire and telephone was collected from a final sample of 76 districts. Data were gathered and analyzed on the size of districts, type of OD program, problems addressed, approaches taken, how the program got started and on a whole host of factors involved in the initiation and operation of the program. Direct information was also obtained on the outcomes of the programs - impact on the organization and on students, attitudes toward OD and its diffusion, and the degree of institutionalization of the program in the district. Multiple regression analyses were carried out to determine the influence of district characteristics, and various operating factors on the outcomes of the OD effort. Several clear and important new findings about the nature, use and effects of OD were uncovered, and are discussed in the report. To the best of our knowledge this study represents the first large scale quantitative analysis of OD programs in school districts.

Volume IV, Case Studies, contains three on-site case studies conducted by us. The three cases were selected from the sample of 76. The purpose of the case studies was to analyze in more detail different types of OD programs and their use. We interviewed a cross section of people in each district and analyzed available documentation. Each case study was selected to represent a different type of OD focus - Case Study A involved a Survey Feedback and Professional Development approach, Case Study B combined an MBO/OD focus, and Case Study C was primarily Curriculum based. The case study themes provided more illuminating and explanatory detail regarding the findings in the district analysis, as well as suggested some new ideas about the use of OD in school districts.

Volume V, Implications for Policy, Research and Practice, summarizes the main results of the project as a whole, sets out a revised working definition of OD in schools, and formulates a series of policy and research recommendations for different organiztions: local school districts, intermediate units, universities, state, provincial and federal government agencies concerned with education. Recommendations for how and if OD should be used and about the future of OD in schools are also discussed in Volume V.

A great deal of cooperation and help made this study possible. We would like to thank the OD consultants and school district personnel who provided so much time and information in giving us a rich array of information on their activities and programs. Leaders and other school personnel in the three case study sites - Winnipeg in Canada, Adams County District No. 12, and Garden City in the United States - deserve a special thanks for spending so much time with us.

Richard Schmuck made valuable suggestions regarding the design of the study. Frederick Mulhauser of NIE was helpful and supportive throughout the study in formulating important policy questions to be addressed. Joan May of OISE worked beyond the call of duty in providing administrative help and coordination. We would like to thank her for her strong support in helping us complete the project.

A limited number of copies of the volumes are available at cost:

Vol. I	-	Introduction and Executive Summary	$ 1.50
Vol. II	-	Review of Reviews	$ 4.00
Vol. III	-	OD Consultants/OD Programs in School Districts	$ 4.50
Vol. IV	-	Case Studies	$ 10.50
Vol. V	-	Implications for Policy, Research and Practice	$ 2.50
		Total for all five volumes -	$ 23.00

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Ten years ago there was only a smattering of Organization Development (OD) work going on in school districts. Today there appears to be a range of OD programs or events occurring with school districts and their personnel, but we really do not know the nature or extent of these efforts. A thorough state of the art assessment was badly needed in order to analyze what is going on, to determine the impact of OD on schools, and to provide a firm basis for local, state and federal policy regarding the use of OD in schools.

Volume one consists of two parts. In part one we describe briefly the purpose, context and background of the study. Part two contains an executive summary of the entire study and all its components - a critical review of the literature, an empirical study of OD consultants working in the field of education in Canada and the United States, an analysis of OD programs in school districts, three case studies of different types of OD programs in school distircts, and a program of policy recommendations for local school districts, intermediate units, universities, state or provincial departments of education and federal agencies involved in education.

I. PURPOSE AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Despite the number of articles and books reporting on or advocating OD work in schools, we really do not possess answers to some basic questions.

(1) What is the extent of OD work in school districts across Canada and the United States?

(2) How many OD consultants are active in education? What is their background, and the nature of their activities?

(3) What are the different types of OD approaches or programs in operation?

(4) What are the conditions or factors associated with sustained or successful OD efforts compared to less successful ones?

(5) What do we know about the impact of OD programs?

(6) What policy and strategic implications derive from a thorough assessment of where educational OD is and where it is going?

The nature of schooling and the history of OD in education do not indicate a clearcut role for OD in school systems, although certainly the potential is evident. Most people tend to treat schools as a taken-for-granted part of their social background. They do an effective job of keeping children safely off the streets and out of the labour market. So, except for an occasional indignant article in the newspaper or magazines, or the inconvenience we experience when teachers strike, we go about our business, expecting that schools will continue to be kept, and that our children will emerge from them with reasonable amounts of literacy, computational skills, and information.

Yet schools are a pervasive institution in developed societies. All of us must spend at least ten, usually twelve or thirteen years of our young lives in them. On any given weekday in 1976 in the United States, about 45,000,000 students (nearly 90% of all children aged 5-17) were in public elementary and secondary schools, and 5,000,000 more in 18,000 non-public schools. There are about 16,000 public school districts, with 89,000 school buildings, employing 2.6 million adults. Put another way, about 17% of all public employees are teachers and school administrators. In the United States about 75 billion was spent in 1976 on elementary and secondary schooling; this was 5.8% of GNP (U.S. Department of HEW, 1977). So the scale is substantial.

Schools, of course, are organizations themselves, subsystems of organizations called school districts. They presumably are subject to the ills for which OD is a potential cure, have money to pay for professional intervention efforts, if they deem the effort to be potentially beneficial, and might be able to accomplish their missions with more effectiveness as a result. It is likely, however, that proportionately fewer schools than other non-profit agencies, and than profit-making organizations, are using OD.

Though schools are in fact organizations, they do have special properties that make them interesting - and condition efforts at facilitative intervention. First, there is goal diffuseness: the organization's mission is usually abstractly stated, with output measurement a difficult matter (Miles, 1967; Miles & Schmuck, 1971), partly because of the long time-line involved. Second, technical capability is often sub-optimal; the knowledge base underlying educational practice is relatively weak, and/or not well diffused to practitioners (Sieber, 1968). Third, there are typically coordination problems; schools and school districts tend to be low-inter-dependent, "loosely-coupled" systems (Bidwell, 1965; Weick, 1976) where goals do not connect well with means, and where accountability is low and autonomy high.[1] Fourth, schools have boundary management problems; the skin of the organization seems unbearably thin, over-permeable to dissatisfied stakeholders. (Parents feel free to complain and exert pressure on teachers, but does a motorist ever get into an oil refinery to second-guess the way someone is running a catalytic cracker?) Fifth, an associated reality is that schools (at least, public schools) are "domesticated", owned by their environments, and are non-competitive for resources (Carlson, 1965). Survival is guaranteed, and as Pincus (1974) has suggested, the incentives for innovation are feeble. Sixth, schools form a constrained, decentralized system: though in the United States there are 16,000 districts and 89,000 separate buildings, each nominally autonomous, there are many national constraints exerted by standardized testing, a national textbook market, various accreditation and certification requirements, and a variety of legislation. (Miles, 1977)

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[1] As Miles (1977) points out, such a feature is not necessary to be deplored: loosely-coupled systems tend to be more flexible and adaptive, less a prey to environmental threat, less vulnerable to incompetence, and more innovative than are more tightly-coordinated systems.

We might expect, then, that schools might seek assistance with problems generated by one or more of these properties - for example, help with goal-setting, coordination, or environmental buffering - or, less optimistically for OD's future in schools, avoid seeking help because of these very properties (if goals are diffuse and survival is guaranteed, why aim for self-renewal?) Our study was in part aimed at assessing which alternative is more empirically frequent.

Some History

OD in schools, like OD itself, is only about two decades old. The first activity that might reasonably be labelled OD (as contrasted with human relations training of individuals) is probably the work at China Lake by Buchanan and others in 1954. The Esso developments in the late fifties were the first in-company work with any momentum. As in industrial settings, T-group work within schools began as early as the mid-50's, but the first OD project as such in schools was that mounted in 1963 (Miles, Project on Organization Development in Schools) at Columbia. Subsequent projects and centers which had a strong effect on the development of educational OD were the USOE-financed COPED project (1964), the sustained program at the Center for Advanced Study in Educational Administration at the University of Oregon (1968 onward), the briefer efforts of the Educational Change Team (University of Michigan 1967-70) and the Program in Humanistic Education (SUNY Albany, 1969-73). For more historical detail, the reader is referred to Miles and Schmuck (1971).

NTL began the first systematic training program for OD practitioners in 1965; the OD Network has grown from about 375 members in 1970 to 1131 presently. OD in education, as might be expected from the chronology above, has developed more slowly. By 1971 Schmuck and Miles located 187 practitioners who said they had carried out OD work with schools lasting a year or more, but they could not find more than "a handful" of school distircts where an actual institutionalized OD capability existed. Blumberg (1976) pointed out that only ¼ of 1% of the members of the OD Network in 1974 listed public school districts as their affiliation.

Blumberg went on to predict that diffusion of OD to any substantial extent among schools was unlikely, because of such features as the interpersonal orientation of school administrators, the individually oriented style of staff development programs, the lack of "hard data" on educational OD outcomes, and current economic constraints. Derr (1976) went further, claiming that properties of schools such as lack of performance indicators, guarateed survival, non-collaborative stance of employees, and "civil service mentality" were basically incongruent with OD concepts. These assertions can be countered, and were, by Miles (1976) who suggested that OD might well diffuse broadly in schools, if more school administrators than at present had a direct, personal exposure to OD interventions, if financial and organizational incentives were more vigorous, if a critical mass of practitioner advocates began developing, and if more coherent documentation and evaluation data became available. As long as these issues remain at the level of assertions instead of direct study, considerable skepticism about the place of OD in schools can be expected (e.g., Fullan, 1976).

In any case, although the general OD literature has included a dozen reports or so each year of OD work with schools, it remains accurate to say that almost nothing is systematically known about how widely OD is diffused in schools - and about what its effects are when given a serious try in the special sort of animal that school districts are claimed to be. Hence this study, the results of which are summarized in the following section.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The review of reviews and case studies (Vol. II)

We reviewed approximately 70 sources in the literature including some 25 critiques or commentaries on OD, a similar number of overviews, empirical and/or theoretical reviews of the field, and about 15 case studies of OD efforts in school districts. We identified the major issues, problems and state of research knowledge according to four main categories - 1) values, themes and goals of OD, 2) operating characteristics (entry and operational factors in using OD, 3) outcomes, and, 4) the future of OD.

On the issue of values and goals we found that the key components which characterized OD consisted of efforts which involved planned change, long range attempts at improving the quality of life of individuals, improving group and organizational processes and organizational performance, or productivity usually with the asssistance of internal and external change agents, and involving the use of behavioral science concepts and techniques in a reflexive, self-analytic way. We also found two major types of problems at the outset. First, many activities which are labelled OD (e.g. one-shot workshops, training of individuals and small groups, etc) did not meet the definition of what OD is supposed to be. Simply put, many activities which are called OD are not really OD at all. This has contributed to a confusion about what OD is, and to a reputation that OD is superficial or irrelevant. The second type of problem concerned the possible discrepancy between the intentions or espoused values of OD, and the 'values in practice'. Certain critiques of the assumptions and actual use of OD stressed that OD programs may not in fact address the human side of development and the quality of life of organizational members with equal integrity as they address the organizational side. OD practitioners, despite their intentions, may not be operating in a value congruent way with the possible result that a) certain goals are not achieved or b) impact is superficial, or c) OD is experienced as inconsequential or supporting the status quo instead of accomplishing its espoused goals. We also found that many of the definitions of OD were general and tended to mask the complexities, specific components and dilemmas involved in its use.

We then turned to the operating characteristics of OD in school districts and in general, in other types of organizations. Regarding the latter, we analyzed several comparative empirical reviews of OD, and for the former, we analyzed a number of recent case studies of OD in school districts.

To sum up our findings about the use of OD programs in school districts: entry is critical, it depends on strong specific support from top management; either a certain level of organizational readiness must exist, or the OD program must be designed/presented in a way which convinces school people that it is task relevant, practical in the short run, and will not be unduly costly in time or money. On the other, some authors provide strong and convincing evidence that a minimum time expenditure (upwards of four person days per staff) is important to warn people about. There must be some willingness to invest a certain amount of time and energy. Moreover, OD does cost some money, and programs which are totally dependent on outside money will likely not receive the commitment from the beginning. Some financial investment of the district and the schools (and here we are not talking about large sums) would seem to be an accurate indicator of potential success of the program. Decision-making about whether to become involved in an OD program is somewhat complicated. It appears that different routes are possible depending on the conditions. Ideally early participation by all administrators and staff is best. There is some evidence, however, that administrators and teachers could be involved in some pre-start OD activities as a precondition to decisions to participate which would be made at a later time during the early transition phase. Also, political skills and orientation to working with the power relations in the setting are explicitly advocated by some authors.

During the transition or initial use, active involvement, support and understanding of the program by top management, and by principals are essential. When this was present, the programs seem to get off to a good start. When it was absent, the program experienced problems or went nowhere. Sustained training and work over the period of two years also seems to be necessary for implementing OD programs during the transition phase. The establishment and use of internal OD consultants and administrative coordination (preferably with liaison or involvement responsibilities at the school level as well as at the level of coordinating the district effort) combined with proactive use of external consultants is also important - the multiplier approach of using external consultants to train insiders who would in turn train others was also noted. Programs which do not build this internal capacity, and/or which build up a dependency on one or more external consultants are probably heading for trouble.

The review of comparative reviews of OD in organizations showed that the state of theory and research in OD needs considerable more work; in particular, none of the reviews allowed us to test in a rigorous specific way the relationship between goals and operating factors. There are some quite promising beginnings which have appeared in rapid succession in the past two or three years; these beginnings tend to provide support that OD is most effective when it includes support and specific involvement of top and lower level administrators, use of internal change agents using external resources in a proactive way, survey feedback and/or other organizationally focussed efforts rather than lab training or small group work, focus on specific problems rather than general ones, and participative and collaborative modes of intervention; many formally classified OD efforts may not meet the criteria of "authentic OD" vis-a-vis our definitional analysis (i.e., many focus on short-term lab or individual focussed training); a minority of OD efforts take place for more than two years (a time considered by many to be the minimum necessary for effectiveness and institutionalization); there seems to be a slight trend toward more sophisticated and authentic use of OD (that is, a closer congruence between the components of OD and their presence as operating characteristics); lastly, the contribution of the findings in the reviews (based mainly in industrial organizations) to our knowledge of OD in schools is generally supportive or reinforcing, but not specifically helpful - few of the cases involved schools, and the detailed variables and their operation in the school based case studies which we reviewed earlier are not tested at a specific level, because the variables used in the reviews were more crudely measured than would be necessary for such a test.

We explicitly examined the outcomes of OD efforts. Our findings: first, the probability that any given OD program, in or out of schools, will be "successful" is perhaps .5 or less. Failures are as likely as successes. But this conclusion must be qualified in several ways. First, not a few OD programs that have been studied appear to have been ineptly conducted; they focussed on individual training rather than on OD, they dealt with superficial issues, they lacked a coherent model, or they did not match interventions to diagnosed problems. Excluding these studies would improve success rates, of course, but the fact is that any domain of professional practice must in part be judged by how well the average or typical practitioner does.

Second, many studies of OD have had methodological weaknesses, including measurement errors and artifacts, over-reliance on questionnaires, lack of adequate controls, and failure to follow the program for a sustained period. Here it is less clear what the effects on success rates are: it is entirely possible that requiring more research stringency would reduce the proportions of OD programs found to be successful. So we must be cautious about making large claims for OD, in or out of schools.

We should also note that even where success was claimed (or even reasonably well validated), it appears difficult to make precise explanatory statements of obtained results. This is in part because OD's underlying theory is not particularly crisp, in part because of the inherent complexity of studying organizational intervention, and in part because clear process measures, capable of being linked to outcome, were often absent.

Knowledge about OD cumulates slowly. Any given project takes at least two to three years; the N of any given project is for practical purposes one; the complexity of organizations and the object of study and the diverse state of present organization theory retards the development of good OD theory. It seems likely that OD practice in some respects is more sophisticated and competent than what has been written about it. But this is speculation, not well supported.

The assessment of OD's impact in schools as such suffers from all the problems outlined above. Schools also have an extra problem: their "bottom line" outcomes are supposedly those of improved cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in students. But (a) these goals are often diffuse, general and measurable with difficulty; (b) students are often not directly involved in OD programs as participants, but are expected to benefit somehow in a "trickle-down" fashion from human-system or educational programmatic changes introduced among and by the adults of the system. Student benefits certainly need not be the only justification for OD's value in schools - adults in schools have a legitimate claim for a better quality of their working lives - but they cannot be ignored as a criterion of OD's success in schools. So far, impact of this sort has been less frequently reported than impact on adults. And, as with OD in other settings, the explanation of outcomes is weak. We might speculate that coordination of problems and "loose coupling" in schools make it even more difficult to link programs to outcomes. Nonetheless, it is possible to gather more direct evaluation information on the operation of OD programs in schools and on reported outcomes, especially if multiple methods of data gathering are used.

Until this kind of information is more available, the question of the future of OD in schools will remain largely unanswerable. We concluded the review by suggesting that the values and conceptual bases which underly OD are far more important than its technology; the future of OD is contending with mislabelling (one-shot training workshops which are called OD, but do not meet the requirements of the definition) and misuse (applying the technology without its value and conceptual base as fundamental guiding features); there is some hint that the diffusion of more solid OD programs in school districts is occurring on a small scale, but there are probably as many or more misuses and failures as there are successes. Moreover, the data base is weak; much more information is needed on the use of OD in school districts before we can comment on the future of OD in schools. The consultant and school district components of the project were designed to reduce this gap.

The study of consultants. In brief we located 308 consultants who have been doing OD with schools in the United States and Canada. This number is approximately double those located in 1971 by Schmuck and Miles (1971). The consultants are not concentrated in any particular region of either country. About a third are based directly in school districts, and a quarter in universities. Only about half of the sample has received formal training in OD practice, either under university or NTL auspices. Much is learned informally, on the job. Most of the consultants had worked with

only one or two districts. The majority of OD programs they mentioned working on began in 1974 or later; there has been a modest increase in numbers of programs started each year since the late 60's. Altogether, these consultants mentioned 340 different districts in which they had carried out some OD work, and about half of these had operated for a year or more. The median amount of time spent with a district is about 15-20 days annually. The work of these consultants tended to involve task-oriented organizational issues most frequently, then personnel development and socio-emotional issues. Approaches are most typically training, process consultation, problem solving, planning and data feedback; structural approaches, and use of OD task forces and confrontation meetings were less frequent. Direct work with student issues was quite rare.

The study of districts. Through nominations from the consultants, other districts, and state department officials, we located a sample of 76 school districts (56 in the U.S., and 20 in Canada) where OD work had gone on for at least 18 months. The definition used was: "a sustained effort at system self-study and improvement, focussing on change in organizational procedures, processes, norms or structures, using behavioral science concepts". In-service training of separate individuals not aimed directly at system or sub-unit improvement was excluded. Districts in our sample were above-average in size, wealth, and proportion of working-class constituencies. Urban and suburban districts were about equally represented, with towns and villages less frequent. The most frequent reasons for launching OD were task-oriented organizational issues, educational issues as such, and problems of educational output. Crucial "start" conditions were typically support from a new (or the existing) superintendent, secondarily the existence of problems and the availability of grant funds.

The general approaches used varied a good deal: about a third were "classical OD" with strong attention to improving the organization as a human system; another fifth emphasized skills development in personnel. The remainder ranged from MBO/PPBS and comprehensive school improvement approaches to those focussing on curriculum improvement, accountability, and desegregation; a few were quite indeterminate or diffuse in approach. The median length of effort was three years; the bulk of the sample said work was continuing, and would become institutionalized. As with the consultants, the most frequent change technologies used were training, data feedback, problem-solving, planning and process consultation, with less attention to confrontation meetings, OD task forces, and techno-structural activity.

OD programs used outside consultants (median number, 3, with the most salient one spending about 15 days), and many more inside consultants (median number, 12, with the most salient one spending 200 days). The insiders were primarily line managers, with little or no formal or informal training in the conduct of OD programs, and little or no linkage to other OD professionals.

As the programs proceeded, task-oriented and output-oriented concerns remained high, while socio-emotional issues received less attention. Even so, socio-emotional outcomes - both expected and unexpected - were frequently reported as having been achieved.

About half the districts had district level coordinators, an OD steering group, and released time available to support the effort. Specially trained cadres and building-level coordinators were rarer. Training manuals proved the most crucial sort of materials. The operating dollar costs involved varied widely, but the median amount spent annually was only $5 - 10,000, a very modest amount. The time costs were more substantial - about 10 days per year for at least a quarter of the total staff. Only about half the programs had a formal evaluation attached to them, but few of these were systematic or thoroughgoing. However, our questionnaire developed measures of three basic program outcomes: impact, attitudes, and institutionalization; they were only moderately correlated with each other.

The impact of programs was most frequently reported to lie in the task and socio-emotional aspects of organizational functioning. Student effects, often unspecified and mainly "soft" changes rather than "hard" test data, were mentioned by 70% of districts. Altogether, only a third of districts mentioned specific "soft effects" and another 9%, achievement gains. Most districts reported some negative effects, such as resistance, threat, or increased work load, but these seemed to be non-fatal, more or less routine aspects of the work. Finally, it was very clear that the OD programs were associated with an increased rate of educational change, (implementation of instructional innovations) in the district.

The programs also seemed to generate positive attitudes toward OD: only half said they would have done anything differently. Two thirds of the districts thought that OD should "definitely" be used more widely in their country's schools, and the majority had explained their program to others at workshops and conferences, and through informal contact. About a third of the districts had visited other districts to explain their work, had sent out reports, or had written articles. So program users tended to proselytize.

How well institutionalized were the programs? Three quarters of the districts predicted continuation in more or less "built-in" form.

Analysis showed that both impact and positive (dissemination-prone) attitude were necessary conditions for institutionalization: impact without positive attitude, or attitude without evidence of impact tended to make institutionalization unlikely.

Regression analyses examining the correlates of these three types of outcomes showed that impact was most likely to be high in programs of larger scale (dollars, time), with good technical support (inside and outside consultants, training materials) and sustained task orientation (including a structural emphasis). Positive attitudes towards dissemination of OD programs were most likely in larger-scale programs, with task and structural emphasis, plus attention to educational content

issues as such. The presence of internal coordinators was another positive indicator. Firmer institutionalization was also present in programs with strong educational and structural emphases, supported by training materials and manuals. But the scale of well-institutionalized programs turned out to be moderate, rather than large, with less reliance on external consultants. Large scale programs were less likely to become institutionalized.

The general approach to OD also made a difference in outcome. "Classical" OD, plus two other system-oriented, comprehensive approaches (comprehensive school improvement and MBO/PPBS-related) were most likely to show clear impact, positive attitudes and institutionalization. "Indeterminate" approaches without a clear rationale, "personnel development" (skill training for individuals), and state-mandated "accountability" approaches all were inferior on the three outcomes (except that personnel development programs tended to be institutionalized at an average rate). Canadian OD programs, on the average, were less effective on all three outcomes than those in the United States, largely because they were "indeterminate" or "personnel-development"-oriented, rather than system oriented, and had fewer well-trained internal or external consultants available.

We draw several conclusions from the school district study. It appears that there is a great deal of "hidden" or less visible OD work in school districts which neither contributes to the practice and theory of OD beyond the district, nor benefits from association with others doing similar work. Second, there is variation in approaches to OD, which in turn is related to subsequent effectiveness. There is more than one route to success, but some routes are less effective than others - notably those with unsystematic theory or with a sole focus on individual training. Finally, in general, school districts interested in OD would be well advised to address the entry and operating factors identified in our analyses of school district experience.

The case studies. Three case studies were carried out: one was a combined survey feedback and professional-development approach in a large urban Canadian district, the second was an MBO-linked approach in a moderate-sized suburban U.S. district, and the third was a curriculum-based approach in a small U.S. district. Many themes from the district study were re-confirmed in the cases, particularly the roles of top-management support needed for program initiation, the need for structural and educational task emphasis, the importance of strong and sustained inside change agent presence, the low dollar cost and high time costs, and the existence of reasonably clear (but poorly evaluated) obtained benefits. These benefits were limited, however, in extent of staff coverage, and student impact. But some new themes appeared: (1) the importance of a clear, coherent

program vision, accompanied by careful front-end planning; (2) the possibility that OD programs are easier to launch when the external environment is not turbulent; (3) the importance of a close working partnership between a sophisticated inside change agent and the top manager of the district; (4) the idea that the OD program is not an "add-on" but a "way of life" in the district; (5) the importance of "multiplier" effects achieved by steady attention to the training of internal trainers; and (6) the likelihood that real institutionalization may take up to 5 years or more to achieve.

Sampling limitations. The consultant study findings are probably quite representative. The questionnaire was brief, and the incentives for replying plausible (we offered a list of other consultants, and a list of current OD-using districts, plus a report summary). The 45% return rate is conservative, since we knew that many non-replying sample members were not actually consultants but informants about OD-using districts.

The district study findings should be interpreted with more care. A number of respondents refused response on grounds of length; the incentives (same as for consultants) were probably weaker for district personnel. The data are self-reports of individual respondents — themselves usually key figures in the effort — providing information on behalf of the district. We do not know what the assessment of the programs by other administrators, or teachers, in those districts would be, although the three case studies are encouraging validations of the questionnaire data in this respect. We do not know how teachers or students would have responded.

Perhaps most crucially, our 76 districts, though they are a much larger sample than anyone would have predicted existed, are a success-biased sample. They had sustained OD work in their systems for at least 18 months, and liked what they had done enough, in most cases, to continue it. They also liked it enough that they felt free to describe the experience, and to take one to two hours to complete the questionnaire. Our sample does not include districts who had never heard of OD, or who knew about it but did not try it, or who knew about it, tried it and discontinued it short of 18 months. Finally, we should remind the reader that the sample over-represents larger and wealthier districts.

The three case studies are success studies drawn from an already success-biased sample. They validate the questionnaire responses, but they are exhibits of OD working well. As such, they are instructive — but they can obscure the fact the other programs in our sample of 76 were limping, and less effective.

Implications for policy, research and practice

The study sample was deliberately chosen to locate districts with sustained OD experience: thus our implications are based on the experience of a reasonably successful set of users.

1. The future of OD in schools - OD aims at improving school district capability through systematic, sustained, self-analytic means, dealing with both organizational effectiveness and individuals' "quality of work life". As an innovation, OD is complex, not well understood, and time-costly. So, though it is effective when well carried out, less than 1% of U.S. and Canadian districts are using OD, and the diffusion rate is increasing slowly. The diffusion rate could be accelerated through modest stimulative action by state and Federal agencies, which are outlined below. Medium scale matching funds programs are probably more effective than large scale externally funded programs which we found to be slightly negatively associated with subsequent institutionalization.

2. Advice to local school districts - OD seems beneficial to districts regardless of their size, wealth, location, or socio-economic character. Districts which define their needs in task-oriented, educationally focused terms and consider structural changes a possibility are more likely to be successful, particularly if the superintendent supplies strong initial support.

OD programs have a favorable cost-benefit ratio: they can reasonably be expected to improve organizational climate and functioning, increase instructional innovations, and improve student outcomes. Dollar costs are less than ½ of 1% of total budget, easily comparable to in-service education costs; personnel time investment is larger (10 days a year per person), and programs require about 5 years for firm institutionalization. Program effects such as resistance, defensiveness and insecurity are natural, but do not seem to jeopardize program success.

More effective programs are systematic, with a well developed framework, aimed at structural change rather than just personnel training. They are steadily supported by top management, must be carefully planned at initiation, and have a district-level coordinator probably spending at least 1/3 time. Competent outside consultants (perhaps 20 days a year) can aid with early planning and program development, and with developing a cadre of well-trained inside consultants--an essential component for OD effectiveness and continued use. The cadre's work in extending the OD program to all parts of the system will be facilitated if systematic re-usable program components or packages are developed and locally adapted. A full-time OD specialist, working closely with the superintendent, is desirable in districts of 1,000 or more staff.

3. Intermediate units - For states and provinces providing regional assistance to local districts, useful OD services would include supplying consultation, and developing training for and networks of competent OD consultants, so that a better "infrastructure" emerges. They could also sponsor awareness conferences for local administrators, and aid adoption and implementation of validated OD approaches using methods like those employed by the National Diffusion Network in the United States. Modest matching-grant support might also be provided to local districts for (a) program initiation and planning; and (b) locally-mounted "lateral" dissemination efforts, in which districts prepare materials, hold workshops for other districts, report their work, and send consultants to other districts.

4. Universities - Much early OD work in schools was university initiated, and up to a quarter of all educational OD consultants are university based. Universities could usefully develop training programs for external and internal OD consultants, stimulate awareness/interest in their area through conferences, and carry out experimental projects in collaboration with local districts, especially with accompanying research.

5. State and provincial departments of education - For those departments with a clear interest in supplying support and facilitation to local districts (as contrasted with the historic regulatory role), OD has promise as a method of district capability enhancement. OD should not be mandated, but departments should work for enabling legislation which would permit the use of state funds for local system improvement. A small grants program for experimental projects would also be useful. OD also should be used with departments of education themselves, both to improve their functioning, and to provide "knowledge of acquaintance" with OD for department personnel.

6. Federal education agencies - Agencies such as NIE, which commissioned this study, the Office of Education, Canada Council (now called the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada/SSHRC), and the Ministry of Education, can usefully aid the responsible progress of OD in schools at this point by supporting research and development work; a modest amount of such support could materially increase the present gradual diffusion of a worthwhile educational improvement strategy.

Specifically, we suggest support of (a) improvement of OD-supportive materials through contracts for review of existing materials and the development of new materials; (b) development of prototype training programs for OD consultants, particularly those working within local districts; (c) operation and documentation for OD practitioner network development, so that OD change agents have supportive colleagueship for their efforts; (d) improved conceptualization through reviews and analysis; (e) better evaluation of OD efforts, both through review of existing studies, and funding local district evaluation efforts; (f) more extensive dissemination efforts, including the production of case studies, awareness conferences, a clearing house, and laterial dissemination by districts; (g) research on a wide range of questions on OD adoption, implementation, and outcome; (h) experimental diffusion projects using an NDN-like model; (i) direct operational grants for OD to local districts (though this is not advisable for several years, until the knowledge and practice base and the number of users has expanded considerably).

Primary priority should be given to development of support materials and improved OD practitioner competency, along with some dissemination effort. If there is a larger, responsible base of coherent OD practice in schools, more intelligent and illuminating research can be carried out.

OD and its future in schools

A revised definition

As we have seen, the question of what OD "is" is not simple, and one subject to a good deal of debate in the general OD literature. Our present inclination is toward a revised definition of this sort:

> Organization development in school districts is a coherent, systematically-planned, sustained effort at system self-study and improvement, focussing explicitly on change in formal and informal procedures, processes, norms or structures, using behavioral science concepts. The goals of OD include both the quality of life of individuals as well as improving organizational functioning and performance.

The revisions should be noted. The requirement of coherence and systematic planning may be too normative, but does serve to distinguish OD from haphazard efforts casually labelled "OD", as increasingly seems to be the case in our experience. The emphasis on explicitness indicates that OD deals directly with organizational phenomena and their alteration, rather than inducing changes indirectly through some other vehicle. The inclusion of both formal and informal organizational issues makes for more thoroughness, and excludes simply-"official" rearrangements. The emphasis on quality of life of individuals and on organizational performance highlights the dual goal of OD and potential problems in pursuing these goals in a balanced value congruent way. The permissive inclusion of educational content acknowledges that such work is a primary task of school districts, but indicates that curriculum-focussed work is not necessarily OD in the absence of the preceding qualifiers. The label "sustained" is perhaps best left unspecified, though the 18-month figure is probably useful as a guide, given the year-by-year planning often characteristic of school districts.

The future of OD in schools

Although our data located many more OD-using districts than most knowledgeable people thought had existed, it seems quite unlikely that more than 1% of U.S. and Canadian districts are engaged in OD. The increase in the diffusion rate is at present very gradual. We are dealing with a relatively complex, poorly "packaged", poorly understood, and labor-intensive innovation, - and, an innovation which, once adopted, is likely to cause substantial changes in the adopting organization. That these changes are generally positive does not obscure the fact that the "bureaucratic costs" of the innovation (Pincus, 1974) are high. The incentives for adoption are not universally present in school districts. OD appears to be a good way to increase instructional innovation, to increase participation by all levels of personnel, and to improve various aspects of task and socio-emotional

functioning, if it is done right, i.e., if the program meets the requirements in the definition of OD, and if it is implemented in a way which includes the key operating characteristics identified in our review of the literature, and in our school district sample. But not all districts (or their communities) want to innovate; not all superintendents and principals wish for more upward influence on teachers' parts; and not all districts feel a clear need for better functioning, even though external observers might claim that any social system has its poorly functioning aspects. In any case, the future of OD in school districts is clouded by the scarcity of well articulated programs and practice which are consistent with its underlying principles and goals. This may also be true of OD's use in other types of organizations, but it is especially problematic in schools due to the recency of its emergence and to the adverse environmental conditions which are now demanding more of OD and other educational innovations than was the case in the 1960's.

So the prospects for OD in the future of schooling in these two countries are not clear. On balance, we believe that encouraging the further diffusion of OD is worthwhile, and that some deliberate, stimulative efforts can be mounted for a relatively small cost, as we have discussed above. Without such efforts, OD in schools will probably continue to diffuse slowly, and/or to suffer the fate of vulgarization that has occurred with most other complex and substantial educational innovations, from "progressive education" onward.

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